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ITD Director Brian Ness wins nationwide Navigator Award celebrating innovation, citizen-focused government

BOISE - Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) Director Brian Ness has won the 2016 Navigator Award from the national organization *Route Fifty*. The award, in the "Agency and Department Chiefs" category, is based on his citizen-focused approach to government and a transformative style.

Ness and several other winners from across the country representing different categories were honored **yesterday (Wednesday, Nov. 16)** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. [Click here to see the Navigator award summary for Ness.](#)

"Brian's inclusive management style and commitment to constant innovation and improvement have made the Idaho Transportation Department not only one of our most successful state agencies, but also one of the best places to work and build a career," said Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter. "I'm proud of Brian's leadership at ITD, which has done wonders to build public trust in its operations, the confidence of Idaho motorists, and ensure that all citizens are getting their money's worth."

In a recent address at an innovation event in late October, Ness reminded employees, "Don't ever underestimate each and every position we have here at ITD. Don't ever underestimate the importance those functions play no matter how far removed they are from the job you do, how much impact they might have on your job if they quit doing what they do. Every function every position is important. Don't ever forget that."

Ness won in a category honoring "individuals across state, county and municipal governments who have demonstrated the ability to implement innovative ideas to solve problems and improve public-sector services in the communities they serve." According to *Route Fifty*, these leaders are "harnessing the power of their teams and communities to transform the way they deliver services."

Route Fifty Executive Editor Michael Grass said, "The main thing that stood out was Ness' emphasis on empowering employees to find savings and efficiencies. We were intrigued by the origins of that approach and why it has worked so well for ITD."

Since his arrival in 2010, ITD has been transformed behind Ness' results-focused vision centered on a belief that government needs to serve citizens, not themselves.

"Having employees create solutions is central to this change," Ness said. "The decisions are being made on the frontline, where the work is being done, which leads to better decisions and more innovative solutions. Ultimately, this award represents ITD's commitment to all of the state's 1.1 million drivers."

Employee initiatives, like trimming more than 150 positions while improving levels of service, have saved taxpayers more than \$55 million. The savings are then spent on critical road and bridge needs statewide. He has realigned the agency to reduce overhead without sacrificing employee jobs or performance, spearheaded innovations that have stretched very limited financial resources, and encouraged a shift in the culture of the agency to produce a more skilled, robust workforce. This has also dramatically improved the department's performance. ([Link to ITD performance dashboard](#))

Along with realignment, a philosophy of the proper role of government, and a commitment to transparency and accountability, the "Innovate ITD" program is a centerpiece to the transformation.

[Link to Ness nine-step video and opening remarks at the innovation event in late October.](#)

Since the program began in 2014, ITD has:

- Implemented more than 424 innovations,
- Generated savings and efficiency improvements of more than \$2.1 million,
- Realized more than 70,000 contractor and employee hours saved,
- Created nearly 165 customer-service improvements.

The savings are being used to stretch resources for maintaining roads and bridges, and provide better customer service.

From very humble beginnings of five-percent employee participation in 2014, to 15-percent employee engagement in the second year, to now more than a third of ITD's workforce participating, the program continues to pick up steam. Ultimately, the goal is to gather innovation ideas from every one of the department's nearly 1,600 employees.

From his first day, Ness has repeated the mantra of becoming the best transportation department in the country. It is a lofty vision, but he is proving that it can be done.

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